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ABSTRACT

This study is based upon a mailed questionnaire taken from a nationwide sample of adoptive parents, and is part of a larger on-going study of contemporary trends in adoption. A question of interest is that whether those parents who have renounced more traditional conceptions of family life have become more receptive toward "hard-to-place" children. It is hypothesized that political conservatism and conventional religiosity would be incompatible with accepting the "hard-to-place". This was found to be true only in some cases, such as in the adoption of black children. The findings suggest that those parents in the forefront in assuming more contemporary family life styles are more amendable to parenting minority children. Also suggested is that the kind of child parents choose to adopt closely reflects their values and institutional commitments. The findings point to a more general need to re-evaluate the criteria employed in placing stigmatized children. For instance, commenting on the reported exclusion of couples with radical politics from the pool of prospective adoptive parents for trans-racial placements; the study suggests that these parents might in fact be among the most appropriate. (Author/AM)

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"Changing Family Patterns and the Adoption of Minority Children"*

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"Changing Family Patterns and the Adoption of Minority Children"

Abstract: This paper examines the impact of changing family patterns on the adoption of minority children. It was found that families possessing more contemporary family patterns--sharing work and parenting roles--were more willing to adopt minority, older, handicapped and retarded children. It was hypothesized that political conservatism and conventional religiosity would be incompatible with accepting the hard-to-place. This was found to be true only in some cases, such as in the adoption of black children. The results suggest that child preferences converge with political and religious values.

The Problem

There are now some 425,000 children in the United States without families (Nutt, 1974). Minority member children--Blacks, Hispanics, older, the psychologically and the physically handicapped--are disproportionately overrepresented among this population. The vast majority of these children travel through a continually revolving door of foster homes, public and private institutions which--in the absence of stable family life--usually exacts a heavy toll on these youngsters, often inflicting irreversible psychological damage and impaired social adjustments. Also, a heavy burden is sustained by the society to support the enormous variety of temporary child care arrangements these children require.

Although a portion of these children ultimately will be returned to their relatives and families, most can look forward to a childhood conducted under institutional auspicies with all

its attendant disadvantages. A recent Massachusetts study revealed that of all children in foster care in that state, 67.3% had been in the system 2 or more years; 83% of the children never had been returned to their parents (Gruber, 1973). Although adoption is by no means the only solution for dealing with the matter of child neglect, clearly, its expansion may contribute a great deal toward alleviating the scope of these problems.

Increasing numbers of social scientists and child welfare advocates have become acutely aware of the needs and rights of all children to permanent homes to adequately provide for their psychological and social development (Goldstein, Freud, Solnit, 1973). In recent years adoptive placements of so-called 'hard-to-place' children have increased phenomenally. Although no national data have been collected on the subject, in the state of Massachusetts a study showed a 300% increase in older child adoptions (from 44 to 124) and a 200% increase of black and racially mixed children (from 41 to 78) in the years from 1969 to 1972 (Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange, Annual Reports, 1969-1972). In 1972, for the first time the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange began to tabulate data on adoptions of handicapped children--another indicator of a possible growing trend in this realm as well. Notwithstanding these promising trends, most minority children remain, as the agencies term them, 'hard-to-place'.

Little is known about what groups in the population and

what socio-cultural characteristics might be most and least amenable toward accepting these kinds of children. Are there significant differences in the acceptability of different kinds of hard-to-place children? Are there any kinds of family life styles that are associated with accepting minority children? Answers to the above questions contain important policy implications for social work practitioners that may prove considerably useful for locating prospective homes for minority children. Moreover, this problem appears to contain a fruitful ground for exploring uninvestigated dimensions of changing American family life.

Background and Theoretical Considerations

In the past adoption agencies and adoptive parents have resisted the adoption of children stigmatized by race, ehtnicity or physical handicap (Nutt and Snyder, 1973). Both agencies and families regarded the ideal adopted child as one which would be indistinguishable from a normal healthy infant born to parents. Adoption agencies used to match parents and children, not only on physical characteristics, but also on less visible aspects such as religion (Elton and Susan Klibanoff, 1973). Most adoptive families went to great lengths to conceal the fact of adoption from other persons, in many cases witholding this information even from their adoptive children (H. David Kirk, 1964). Formerly, adoption was oriented almost entirely toward simulating biological parenthood; people who adopted wanted only healthy infants, racially and ethically homogeneous to themselves.

More recently, adoption has been changing. In the last twenty years there has been a remarkable increase in the number of white American parents who have adopted transracially and transnationally. In the last five years from 1968 to 1973 The Immigration and Naturalization Service reported a 250 per cent increase in the number of transnational adoptions by American citizens (Adam and Kim, 1971; U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Immigrant Orphans Admitted to the U.S., 1971-1973). These were predominately Asian children, but a considerable number of Latin American children were also present. There were 1612 transnational adoptions in 1968 and 4015 in 1973. Trends in domestic transracial adoption are harder to document, but the most comprehensive and reliable data available suggest a 40 per cent increase in the adoption of black children by white parents between 1969 and 1971 (Grow and Shapiro, 1974).

To some extent this trend may be understood simply as a response to the diminishing number of white infants available for adoption. Legalized abortion and the wider availability of effective contraceptives have reduced the number of illegitimate births in the United States (Nutt, 1974; McNamara, 1975). The growing trend among unwed mothers to retain custody of their children has further diminished the number of infants available for adoption (Westoff, 1976).

Yet, there is reason to believe that these changes reflect more than the decline of adoptable infants. In the past

infertility was the primary motive for adoption. Today this seems to be changing. An examination of the recent adoption literature suggests that a considerable number of those adopting today include fertile couples (McNamara, 1975; E. and S. Klibanoff, 1973; Fanshel, 1972; Nutt and Snyder, 1973).

In the period when these dramatic changes in adoption have been taking place there have also been equally remarkable changes in the realm of American family life. It would seem plausible to suggest that these changing adoptive patterns reflect shifts in family life as a whole.

It is widely acknowledged among family sociologists that the American family is currently in a state of transition. During the twentieth century family life has changed greatly: patriarchal authority has declined considerably; household and child care tasks have come to be more equally shared by both spouses; family size has greatly diminished; married women have entered the work force in unprecedented numbers; interreligious and interracial marriages and divorce-- once rarities--now are commonplace events. Clearly, the traditional role segregated patriarchal family is fast becoming obsolete. Members of emerging contemporary egalitarian families feel less bound by traditional conceptions of kinship and increasingly seek to maximize individual choice and personal need satisfaction in family relationships (Farber, 1964).

There may well be a relationship between egalitarian patterns of family life and newer and more unconventional modes of

family formation such as the adoption of hard-to-place children. As individuals assume more flexible and interchangeable roles in their interrelationships among each other--less bound by traditional conceptions of the family--they may well become more receptive to a wider range of possible family members.

Family theorists claim that contemporary families have become increasingly flexible, about the kinds of intimate relationships they find acceptable (Keller, 1971; Kanter, 1974; Farber, 1972). The increasing interest in adopting children racially and culturally unlike their parents appears to be consistent with, if not a derivative of this more general pattern of accepting greater diversity and choice in family life. Yet, it remains to be demonstrated empirically whether those who have been in the vanguard of family change have also been more inclined to be revolutionary in their involvements with adoption. In the present research we are interested in exploring whether those who have renounced more traditional conceptions of family life have indeed become more receptive toward 'hard-to-place' children.

The acceptability of stigmatized children can not be explained entirely by reference to family patterns. Family values and parental behavior are deeply imbedded in a matrix which includes the economic, religious and political values of America. Traditional ideas about family life are promulgated, legitimated and sustained by traditional social institutions and political values. Bernard Farber has detailed the close

relationship between religious, economic and political ideas which prevailed in prerevolutionary America and the traditional structure of the American family (Farber, 1972). He has argued that these ideas have continued to exert a powerful influence on the course of American family life. Therefore, we expect that adherence to traditional religious and political values would support more conservative family practices and would be incompatible with newer and unconventional modes of family formation such as the adoption of minority children.

We plan to explore two fundamental traditional supporters of the family: conventional religious affiliations and conservative political attachments. We anticipate that those exhibiting great attachments to established religions and political institutions will be less amenable to accepting the hard-to-place and will be more traditional in their adoption preferences. More often they will tend to adopt infant, white and female children, the more widely acceptable kinds of children for adoption, both in the past and at present. H. David Kirk (1964) has cogently argued in his studies of intra-racial adoption in the United States and Canada, that traditional parents are more likely to adopt girls than boys. Boys, Kirk argues, are seen by traditional families as the inheritors of family name, values and property; girls do not assume such a pivotal position. More conservative families are, therefore, more willing to "risk" the adoption of a girl. The "costs" of failure are less.

A great deal of research (Lipset, 1960) finds adherents of conventional religions and conservative politics to exhibit more intolerance towards minorities than their more secular and liberal counterparts. We expect this will be relevant in the case of adopting the stigmatized or minority child and will generally tend to preclude adoption of such children.

Method and Sample

This study was based upon a mailed questionnaire taken from a nation-wide sample of adoptive parents. This work is part of a larger now on-going study of contemporary trends in adoption. Two pretests were conducted and examined before final revised questionnaires were distributed to the sample. That data was collected between the months of November 1974 and October 1975.

While consisting entirely of adoptive parents the sample tends to over-represent those who have already adopted minority children. The typical family in our sample consisted of white, native born parents who have adopted a foreign born child, most often from Asia. The sample was drawn from membership lists provided from a variety of adoptive parent organizations located throughout the country and from several international adoption agencies that specialize in the placement of minority (usually foreign born, non-white) children. Efforts were made in selecting parent organizations to cooperate with the research to enlist the participation of parent groups whose memberships were acknowledged to

include members who had completed trans-racial and trans-national adoptions.

Attempts were also made to ensure the inclusion of at least several constituencies that represented in-country, in-race adopting families. The executive officers to whom we corresponded in the gathering of lists were also asked to provide the names and addresses of any individuals they may know who had adopted children but who did not belong to their orgainzations. When the adoptive family lists exceeded 100 or more names the names were selected on a fixed interval basis so as not to over-represent a particular sub-group in the total sample. In the intial phase of this study 664 questionnaires were returned. The response rate for our adoptive parent population was 61 percent. One follow up letter was sent to delaying respondents in a effort to reduce thenon-response rate.

Analysis of the data shows that it contains a good cross section of white adoptive families, including those who have adopted minority children, as well as those who have not; those adopting through agencies as well as those who have adopted privately; those who belong to adoptive parent organizations and those who are unaffiliated with such groups.

Discussion and Findings*

We asked our respondents to indicate the extent to which husband and wife shared the tasks of feeding children, supervising

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*See also Appendix A.

children at play and diapering babies. We combined these questions in a measure of the degree to which child care tasks were shared. This measure of shared child care was positively associated with the willingness to adopt stigmatized children. We asked our respondents to indicate how willing they would be to adopt children of various descriptions: retarded, older, black and handicapped children. Shared child care was associated with willingness to adopt an older child with a gamma of .143 and chi square approaches significance at the .10 level. See Table I.

Table I

Division of Child Care Labor

		Total	Nontraditional		Traditional	
Total Percent	P	100.0	4.6	25.1	53.7	16.5
Frequency	F	(605.0)	(28.0)	(152.0)	(325.0)	(100.0)
Willingness to adopt older child: Adopt Easily	P	22.8	28.6	28.3	20.3	21.0
	F	(138.0)	(8.0)	(43.0)	(66.0)	(21.0)
Reservations	P	36.0	42.9	34.2	38.8	28.0
	F	(218.0)	(12.0)	(52.0)	(126.0)	(28.0)
Not Consider	P	41.2	28.6	37.5	40.9	51.0
	F	(249.0)	(8.0)	(57.0)	(133)	(51.0)

Chi Square-10.342 with 6 degrees of freedom
Gamma------0.143

Most of the other associations were of similar of greater strength; all of the other chi squares were significant at the .10 level or higher. Examining this hypothesis with the actual

adoption of older children we found that the associations with shared child care persisted.

See Table II

Table II

Division of Child Care Labor

		Total	Nontraditional			Traditional
Total Percent	P	100.0	4.8	25.4	53.4	16.4
Frequency	F	(610.0)	(29.0)	(155.0)	(326.0)	(100.00)
Age of last adopted child at adoption: 2 years or under	P	74.3	41.4	75.5	76.1	76.0
	F	(453.0)	(12.0)	(117.0)	(248.0)	(76.0)
3 - 5 years	P	17.4	44.8	15.5	16.0	17.0
	F	(106.0)	(13.0)	(24.0)	(52.0)	(17.0)
6 years or older	P	8.4	13.8	9.0	8.0	7.0
	F	(51.0)	(4.0)	(14.0)	(26.0)	(7.0)

Chi Square-19.110 with 6 degrees of freedom; significant at .01.
Gamma------0.127

Similar trends were shown with the adoption of black children.

Shared child care is negatively associated with adopting a girl (Gamma .030, Chi square significant at the .20 level). The association is weak and not statistically significant but was found to be in the predicted direction.

We examined two measures of shared work roles: the first was an attitudinal measure, agreement with the idea that women can work and be good mothers at the same time; the second was the employment status of the mother: was she working full time, part time, or was she not employed outside the home. Both of these measures showed much the same pattern as shared

child care. Both agreement with the idea that working women can be good mothers and the mother being employed full time were generally associated with the willingness to adopt minority children. We found, for example, that approval of maternal employment was associated with the willingness to adopt a black child with a gamma value of .278.

See Table III.

Table III

Good Mothers Can Also Pursue Careers

			Total	Agree Strongly			Disagree Strongly	
Total Percent		P	100.0	30.3	32.7	14.1	15.6	7.3
Frequency		F	(630.0)	(191.0)	(206.0)	(89.0)	(98)	(46.0)
Willingness to Adopt Afro-American Child	Adopt Easily	P	24.3	40.3	17.5	19.1	15.3	17.4
		F	(153.0)	(77.0)	(36.0)	(17.0)	(15.0)	(8.0)
	Reservations	P	33.3	30.4	38.8	33.7	28.6	30.4
		F	(210.0)	(58.0)	(80.0)	(30.0)	(28.0)	(14.0)
	Not Consider	P	42.4	29.3	43.7	47.2	56.1	52.2
		F	(267.0)	(56.0)	(90.0)	(42.0)	(55.0)	(24.0)

Chi Square-46.104 with 8 degrees of freedom, significant at .001 level
Gamma------0.278

Behaviorally, acceptance of maternal employment was correlated with the actual adoption of black children with a gamma value of .575

See Table IV. Next page.

Table IV

Good Mothers Can Also Pursue Careers

			Total	Agree Strongly			Disagree Strongly	
Total Percent		P	100.0	30.6	32.7	14.0	15.5	7.3
Frequency		F	(634.0)	(194.0)	(207.0)	(89.0)	(98.0)	(46.0)
Adopted Black Children	No Blacks	P	94.8	88.1	97.6	97.8	98.0	87.8
		F	(601.0)	(171.0)	(202.0)	(87.0)	(96.0)	(45.0)
	Blacks	P	5.2	11.9	2.4	2.2	2.0	2.2
		F	(33.0)	(23.0)	(5.0)	(2.0)	(2.0)	(1.0)

Chi Square-25.079 with 4 degrees of freedom, significant at the .001 level
Gamma------0.575

There appears to be a consistent positive association between our measures of shared work roles and accepting older and black children; the relationships of our independent variables and the acceptance of handicapped and retarded children seemed weaker and less consistent. It is conceivable that the time constraints imposed upon working mothers might limit their receptivity toward these particular kinds of stigmatized children.

We measured religious traditionalism along two axes: the frequency of religious participation and the affiliation with conventional religions. Initially, we expected to find that those more closely affiliated with traditional religious institutions would be more inclined to accept traditional conceptions of parenting and would be less receptive in general toward adopting the hard-to-place.

This led us to also expect that the conventionally religious would prefer to adopt white female infant children. The adoption of a white infant is congruent with a child born to the family in its infancy and racial homogeneity.

To the extent that children diverge from traditional expections we expected that the conventionally religious would be less inclined to accept them. Although the association between religious participation and adopting a girl is in the predicted direction the strength of the association is quite weak. Our findings with regard to the adoption of black children are similar: those with higher rates of religious participation were less inclined to adopt black children and less likely to have actually done so. This was as expected but the associations were not statistically significant.

Contrary to our expectations we found that acceptance of older, retarded and handicapped children was positively associated with religious activism. Table V shows the relationship between religious participation and the acceptance of the retarded.

Table V

Wife's Religious Participation

Willingness to adopt a retarded child		Total	Never	1-4 times a year	5-10 times a year	Monthly	Weekly	More often than weekly
Total Percent	P	100.0	14.7	16.1	7.5	11.2	34.3	16.2
Frequency	F	(641.0)	(94.0)	(103.0)	(48.0)	(72.0)	(220.0)	(104.0)
Adopt Easily	P	3.3	4.3	1.9	2.1	0.0	3.2	6.7
	F	(21.0)	(4.0)	(2.0)	(1.0)	(0.0)	(7.0)	(7.0)
Reservations	P	28.2	22.3	23.3	25.0	22.2	33.6	32.7
	F	(181.0)	(21.0)	(24.0)	(12.0)	(16.0)	(74.0)	(34.0)
Not Consider	P	68.5	73.4	74.8	72.9	77.8	63.2	60.6
	F	(439.0)	(69.0)	(77.0)	(35.0)	(56.0)	(139.0)	(63.0)

Chi Square-17.168 with 10 degrees of freedom; significant at the .10 level
Gamma------0.179

What we may have failed to take into account here is that high levels of religious commitment are related to norms of charity and compassion for the unfortunate and downtrodden members of society. The religiously committed appear to be more willing to accept children stigmatized by individual misfortune but much less inclined to accept those outcast by group membership.

The associations between conventional religious affiliation and our dependent variables are similar to the patterns observed with religious participation. Table VI shows the relationship between conventional religious affiliation and the willingness to adopt a retarded child.

If one looks at the difference between those who are affiliated with a traditional religion--Protestants, Catholics and Jews--and those who have no religious affiliation one sees that there is a positive association between affiliation and the willingness to adopt handicapped and retarded children and a negative association between affiliation and the willingness to adopt a black children The religiously affiliated express similar traditionalism in their choice of girls in adoption.

The data yielded some unexpected findings when we compared Jews with Protestants and Catholics. Jews are usually regarded to be more politically liberal and less religiously committed than adherents of other faiths. Yet, we found Jews to be the

Table VI

Wife's Religion

Willingness to adopt a retarded child		Total	None	Catholic	Jewish	Protestant	Orthodox	Other
Total Percent	P	100.0	3.9	32.7	12.4	44.0	0.3	6.7
Frequency	F	(639.0)	(25)	(209.0)	(79.0)	(281.0)	(2.0)	(43.0)
Adopt Easily	P	3.4	8.0	4.8	0.0	2.8	0.0	4.7
	F	(22.0)	(2.0)	(10.0)	(0.0)	(8.0)	(0.0)	(2.0)
Resverations	P	28.0	16.0	30.6	20.3	27.0	100.0	39.5
	F	(179.0)	(4.0)	(64.0)	(16.0)	(76.0)	(2.0)	(17.0)
Not Consider	P	68.5	76.0	64.6	79.7	70.1	0.0	55.8
	F	(438.0)	(19.0)	(139.0)	(63.0)	(197.0)	(0.0)	(24.0)

Chi Square-19.800 with 10 degrees of freedom, significant at the .05 level

most unwilling of all in considering the adoption of any stigmatized children. There is a negative association between Jewish affiliation and the willingness to adopt black, handicapped, retarded and older children. In the actual adoptions of children the negative association persisted in the adoption of male and black children. To some extent, these findings are consistent with other research in this area. Another study, (Brenner, 1951), has noted greater preferences for females among Jewish adoptive parents.

The meaning of these trends is not altogether clear. There may well be several factors involved. One factor that initially can be ruled out is that the Jews in our sample are unrepresentative. The politics, social status and religious participation found among the members of our sample is consistent with these characteristics among the American Jewish population (Sklare, 1958). One element that may enter into the interpretation of this is that Jews are a particularistic group with a commitment to maintain the continuity of their religious and ethnic culture. This presents formidable obstacles in the adoption of black children particularly at a time of rising tensions between blacks and Jews. Not only are there obstacles to the acceptance of black Jewish children on the part of Jews, but there is a real question of the acceptability of black Jews within the

black community. A black child with white Protestant adoptive parents would have little trouble reconciling his black identity with a black Protestant Christian identity. There is a viable tradition of black Protestant Christian identity. There is a viable tradition of black Protestant Christianity. The same can not be said for black Judiasm, which exists, but is marginal to both communities.

Another element which may well enter into the unwillingness of Jews to consider the adoption of retarded and handicapped children is that Jews are among the groups most conscious of the costs of child rearing. In examining data on Jewish fertility it seems likely that Jews who are making the ascent to middle and upper middle class status are most likely to defer and to reduce child bearing (Goldstein and Goldsheider, 1966). If costs are an important consideration in the care of a retarded or handicapped child, both in terms of time and money, they may appear to be prohibitive to many mobile Jews.

Still another element in the explanation may be the absence of a missionary tradition within Judaism (Dukel, 1955). Sympathy for the unfortunate is often linked with prosletizing efforts. Since Jews do not prosletize they do not see members of other groups as potential converts, thus making them less likely to adopt transracially and transnationally.

Political conservatism was measured by the wife's political identification on a six point scale ranging from very conservative to radical. We found that those on the right tended to be less accepting of black children; the gamma value was .435. See Table VII.

In terms of the other children--the retarded, older, and the handicapped--we found a slight positive association between political conservatism and the willingness to adopt children of these descriptions. However, the associations were quite weak and were not statistically significant. The direction of these associations is similar to those found between increased religious participation and the willingness to adopt. Our initial expectation that political conservatives would be uniformly less accepting of all stigmatized children was not supported by the data. This trend only held true in the case of the black child. However, the more traditional adoptive preferences of political conservatives was evidenced in their greater preferences to adopt girls (gamma=.103, chi square became significant at .02).

Still another factor that appears to influence the willingness to accept minority children which was revealed unexpectedly in our data was people's experience with adoption. Respondents were asked to recall their initial inclinations toward adopting various kinds of stigmatized children both before completing their adoptions and how willing they would be if they were about to adopt again now.

Table VII

Wife's Political Views

			Total	Radical	Very Liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very Conservative
Total Percent		P	100.0	1.6	12.4	33.5	33.1	17.5	1.9
Frequency		F	(635.0)	(10.0)	(79.0)	(213.0)	(210.0)	(111.0)	(12.0)
Willingness to Adopt Afro-American Child	Adopt Easily	P	23.9	80.0	48.1	30.0	14.3	10.8	0.0
		F	(152.0)		(38.0)	(64.0)	(30.0)	(12.0)	(0.0)
	Reservations	P	33.4	0.0	36.7	39.0	27.6	34.2	33.3
		F	(212.0)	(0.0)	(29.0)	(83.0)	(58.0)	(38.0)	(4.0)
	Not Consider	P	42.7	20.0	15.2	31.0	58.1	55.0	66.7
			(271.0)	(2.0)	(12.0)	(66.0)	(122.0)	(61.0)	(8.0)

Chi Square-101.709 with 10 degrees of freedom; significant at the .001 level
Gamma------0.435

Acknowledging the limitations of this retrospective data, the results are nevertheless suggestive. As a result of their experience with adoption 50 per cent showed varying degrees of increased acceptance of hard-to-place children; 40 per cent showed no change and 10 per cent indicated a decline in their acceptance of the hard-to-place.

The greatest change was indicated in increasing acceptance of older children; 26 per cent of our sampled families showed greater willingness to accept these kinds of children; this was followed by increasing acceptance of black children, which experienced a gain of 8 per cent. See Table VIII.

Table VIII

	Before	After	% gain or loss
Slightly Retarded			
Adopt easily	4%	6%	+2
Some Reservations	28%	33%	+5
Would not consider	68%	60%	-8
Afro-American			
Adopt easily	24%	32%	+8
Some Reservations	33%	29%	-4
Would not consider	43%	38%	-5
Older Child			
Adopt easily	24%	50%	+26
Some Reservations	35%	30%	-5
Would not consider	40%	20%	-20
Physical Handicap			
Adopt easily	5%	7%	+2
Some Reservations	30%	33%	+3
Would not consider	65%	60%	-5

Although our sample is not altogether typical of adoptive parents in general, considering the large proportion of families who have adopted recially and culturally diverse children, the trends clearly suggest that social workers may find prospective adoptive parents for older and black children among those who have already adopted.

Summary and Conclusions

Our data reveal that those in the forefront in assuming more contemporary family life styles are more amenable to parenting minority children. There appears to be a close affinity between the development of more flexible and interchangable family roles and the aquisition of wider ranging perspectives of who might be included among family members. As people renounce conventional sex roles they appear to become increasingly willing to extend kinship beyond the traditionally accepted realm of biologically related individuals. Thus, recent trends in adoption appear to be an integral component of more pervasive family changes.

Our findings also suggest that the kind of child parents choose to adopt closely reflects their values and institutional commitments. Liberal and radical parents displayed the most commitment to adopting black children. The conventionally religious showed the greatest interest in handicapped and retarded children. These preferences would seem to indicate that families are often making an

ideological statement in their adoptions. The ideological commitment of liberals and radicals to black children should need no explanation. The commitment of the conventionally religious to the handicapped and retarded can be seen as a reflection of traditional Judeo-Christian compassion for the unfortunate.

Adoption becomes a means of expressing the cultural values of the adopting parents. We would argue that child rearing always has political implications; parents raise children to reflect and perpetuate their values. In adoption this simply becomes more manifest. Adoption creates an additional dimension by permitting parents to select a child that is compatible with their value system.

Initially we had seen parenting stigmatized children as a unitary phenomena. Our data clearly show this is not the case. We had expected that those committed to more secular and liberal viewpoints would exhibit a greater overall willingness to adopt most any stigmatized child. What we found was that secular-liberals differed from the conventionally religious and conservatives not so much in their willingness to adopt stigmatized children, but in the kinds of children they were willing to accept.

Our findings point to a more general need to re-evaluate the criteria employed in placing stigmatized children. A study in the influential journal Child Welfare (Sellers, 1969)

described the exclusion of couples with radical politics from the pool of prospective adoptive parents for trans-racial placements. Our data suggests these might be among the most appropriate parents.

The most immediate implication of our data for social policy is in the adoptive placement of stigmatized children. Social agencies are often reluctant to believe that there are families willing to adopt stigmatized children. Yet, our data suggests that as the trend toward sharing work and child care roles continues, the number of families who would be receptive to the adoption of such children is likely to increase.

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Appendix A

	Traditional sexual division of labor in child care		Do not feel mothers should work		Mother unemployed	
	GAMMA	level at which X^2 achieves significance	GAMMA	level at which X^2 achieves significance	GAMMA	level at which X^2 achieves significance
Willingness to adopt older child	-.143	/10	-.139	/.05	-.246	/01
Willingness to adopt black child	-.265	/.001	-.278	/.001	-.195	/001
Willingness to adopt retarded child	-.190	/.10	-.099	/N.S.*	-.086	/.10
Willingness to adopt handicapped child	-.203	/.05	-.071	/N.S.*	-.127	/.20
Adopted older child (ren)	-.127	/.01	-.147	/30	-.230	/01
Adopted black child(ren)	-.445	/.02	-.575	/.001	-.336	/.001
Adopted a girl	.030	/.20	.081	/N.S.*	.026	/N.S.*

* N.S. stands for Not Significant

	Religious Participation		Conventional Religious Affiliation		Political Conservatism	
	GAMMA	level at which X^2 achieves significance		level at which achieves significance	GAMMA	level at which X^2 achieves significance
Willingness to adopt older child	.064/.30		.02		.034/N.S.*	
Willingness to adopt black child	-.035/.20		.001		-.435/001	
Willingness to adopt retarded child	.179/.10		.05		.02 7'.20	
Willingness to adopt handi-capped child	.205/.02		.001		.021/N.S.*	
Adopted older child(ren)	.106/20		.30		.028/N.S.*	
Adopted black child(ren)	-.136/N.S.*		.05		-.499/.001	
Adopted a girl	.045/N.S..*		.10		.103/.02	

*N.S. means Not Significant